

# Organisational leadership

[Business](#), [Leadership](#)



Through leaders, nations have through history risen and fell and they have provided the impetus for some of the most fundamental changes in history. It would be difficult to imagine the Roman Empire without leaders such as Julius Caesar, or the Mongols along with their brutal regime without Ghengis Khan. Having the ability to lead within organisations is of a growing interest to businesses. Desire to explore this field has resulted from the need to lead companies throughout periods of change, brought by the increase in competition and the recessionary climate in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

The Oxford dictionary defines to lead as Conduct, guide, esp. by going in front; guide by persuasion; guide actions or opinions of, induce to do.

(Oxford Illustrated Dictionary, 1983). Interest in organisational leadership was thought to be first stimulated by the human relations movement in industrial sociology after WWII in the Hawthorne studies. Charles Handy has written much on the field of leadership and felt that the search for the definitive solution to the leadership problem has proved to be another endless quest for the Holy Grail in organisation theory" (Handy, 1993).

However, I feel that leadership is a relationship through which one person tries to influence the behaviour or actions of others in a reciprocal nature. To lead is often thought of as to inspire, influence and motivate. " Effective leaders inspire others to pursue excellence, to extend themselves, and to go beyond the perfunctory job requirements by generating creative ideas" (Cherington, 1989). However, differences do lie within the theoretical gulf between management and leadership per se.

To manage is to accomplish, bring about and have responsibility for the functions of management, which are planning, organising, directing and controlling. Managerial success is viewed as someone who achieves by following prescribed activities and maintaining products and behaviours within prescribed limits. Alternatively, leadership can be thought of as the provision of inspiration, influence and motivation. Effective leadership inspires others to pursue excellence and migrate beyond perfunctory job requirements through the generation of creative ideas.

Leadership might be based on personality, or a behavioural quality.

Leadership is a dynamic process, whereby both leader and subordinate have some influence over each other's behaviour. Good management leadership practices should incorporate the development of teamwork and the integration of individual and group goals. This can be an aid to intrinsic motivation, through better group synergy, through coaching, support and empowerment. Paradoxically to this positive outlook, leadership can be viewed as an elitist, hierarchical and dictatorial - even crushing - as with tyrannical leaders as Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin.

The term leadership often implies the imperialist concept of rising above. However, leadership is necessary to bind groups and to be a voice. It can be said that corporate management is generally more passive and unemotionally attached than dispassionate leaders. Managers often see themselves as conservors of resources and regulators of operating procedures. It can be said that managers have harsher interpersonal goals

than individually-focused leaders and are more likely to adopt softer priorities.

This would not apply however, to the stereotypical view of hard leaders as harsh imperialists. Leadership operates on many levels, not necessarily within the hierarchical structure of an organisation. Leadership can be thought of as a quality not necessarily formally outlined by a particular organisation; it can often come around spontaneously. Attempted leadership is when an individual in a group attempts to exert influence over other members in the group. Successful leadership is when the influence brings about the behaviour intended.

Effective leadership is when successful leadership results in functional behaviour and achievement of goals. Leadership authority can be exercised through an attribute of stated position in a hierarchy. People can be appointed managers without being leaders in the hearts of subordinates. There are a number of approaches on leadership with a vast amount of writing on each, but on this subject it still proves very difficult to give one agreed definition, or best practices on leadership. Dahl saw to even attempt to do this as a bottomless swamp (Handy, 1993).

There are positive and negative implications in this. The elitism of Adolf Hitler and the officer class in The WW2 German army exemplifies the negative aspect, while leaders such as Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela can highlight where positive benefits can be gained. Leadership has a strong link with politics. Politics involves the resolving of situations where differing

interests cause problems. Leadership and power are inextricably entwined, both affecting human behaviour in organisations.

Being abstract, power is an issue difficult to conceptualise. Power is a largely controversial topic, which is both difficult to define and measure with precision. It can be said that power concerns the capacity of individuals to influence their will over others, to overcome resistance on the part of others and to produce results consistent with their interests and objectives. This definition arrives from an individual perspective, but power can be exerted not only by individuals, but by groups, sections, departments, organisations and even nations.

The reality of the situation is that the amount of power an individual can exert upon subordinates is directly related to the volume and belief of the subjects themselves. Social influence is this ability manifest, as social influence can be viewed as the capacity of a group to influence an individual. Bowditch, J. L. and Buono, A. F. , provide enlightening definitions on this subject. " Power is the ability to influence various outcomes. If this is formally sanctioned by an organisation (contractual) or informally supported by individuals or groups (consensual), it is described as legitimate power.

Authority refers to situations where a person (or group) has been formally granted a leadership position... leadership is often manifest in two possible forms, those of: Appointed Leadership and Emergent Leadership.

"(Bowditch ; Buono, 1994). Approaches to the issue of leadership normally fall under one of three headings: trait theories, style theories and contingency theories. Each aspect carries some important issues, but

consideration to one 'best practice' or an amalgam of all three will be given later.